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News Analysis on the Committee on Assassinations

A Question of Survival: Committee Stays On

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The House Select Committee on Assassinations has been awarded a two months' stay of execution, until March 31, to report on, and to justify, its continuing investigation into the murder of President John F. Kennedy and other murders.

The Committee may well survive past the March 31 cut-off date. In fact, a new resolution was easily passed by the House on February 2 giving the Committee considerably broader powers than

it had in the past, and greatly strengthening its position legally and constitutionally. For example, the Committee may now propose related legislation during its ongoing inquiry.

"Strong organized forces," Chairman Henry Gonzales (D-Texas) said, "have combined to stop the inquiry at any cost." Judge Charles C. Sweet of Pennsylvania, who presided over the Yablonski trial, stated in an Associated Press article that "There are vested interests in high places" that do not want to see the original Warren Report

findings to be overturned. Groups such as the Retired Intelligence Officers' Association, organizations of former FBI agents (as named by Mr. Gonzales), and even The New York Times and The Washington Post appear to have conspired to disband the Committee.

But Gonzales is tenacious, having once filibustered for 20 consecutive hours in the Texas Senate to defeat segregation bills. He bought time for his Committee by making frequent appearances on the "Today Show," on "Good

SEE PAGE 2

ASSASSINATION COMMITTEE

continued from page 1

Morning, America," and on CBS Morning News, keeping his Committee in the public eye. He has also been conducting a vigorous campaign in the House to explain his Committee's quest.

Many misleading newspaper reports were printed (documented in past City Dweller articles) charging that this investigation would violate the civil rights of witnesses and others through secret tape recordings, hidden transmitters and voice stress evaluators. These unfounded charges nearly destroyed the investigation.

The Committee has never secretly taped anyone nor did it intend to. Furthermore, it never considered the use of voice stress evaluations without the consent of the witness. The false story about this originated in an article that appeared in The Los Angeles Times on December 15. A close reading of the complete transcript of all that was said during that interview between the Bureau Chief of the L.A. Times and Richard Sprague, Chief Counsel for the Committee, reveals that Sprague at no time proposed committing any of the civil rights violations noted above. This article was an example of how pure speculation can be turned into "fact" by an irresponsible journalist.

This authorization is probably the real reason for the recent powerful attacks against the Committee by David Burnham of The New York Times and by George Lardner of The Washington Post. Both of these reporters may have information they would rather not reveal. Burnham was

the reporter whom Karen Silkwood was going to see minutes before she died; she was uncovering alleged unsafe conditions at the Kent-McGee nuclear plant in Oklahoma. Lardner admits to having been with David Ferrie--Jim Garrison's key witness in his New Orleans-based Kennedy assassination conspiracy case--the night Ferrie died. Lardner was with him until 4 a.m. and Garrison found Ferrie dead at 9 a.m. After Ferrie's death, Garrison's case fell apart; it could be argued that this investigation was largely discredited by the Eastern establishment press.

There have been an extraordinary number of "coincidental" deaths in the assassination case--Dorothy Kilgallen, Life Magazine's Gary Underhill, the CBS news reporter killed in the same plane crash with Dorothy Hunt, Jim Koethe, the newsman who met with Jack Ruby in Ruby's apartment on November 24, 1963, and many others. None of these news sources, who had met alone with Ruby or Oswald after the crimes, ever had a chance to reveal what they knew.

Nicholas Von Hoffman's article on Nixon's fall from grace in the current Penthouse clearly reveals how media executives and businessmen combined to destroy Nixon, and why. This kind of conspiracy between media executives and the Establishment could also have existed during the first Kennedy assassination investigation. Now the same thing is happening again. The more things change, the more they remain the same.